

In Support of House Bill 1035

Dated: 3/5/2015

This is a testament to the workplace bullying I suffered at the hands of two – (2) Judicial Branch supervisors between '08 -'11 and the ramifications I still suffer from for their unbridled actions as bolstered by Court Operations.

I was hired as a TAC/Paralegal by Chief Clerk of Court, Jeffrey Feldman in September, 2005 at New London Superior Court. During my three – (3) year timeframe of employment as a temp there I became a well-noted employee, team player both internally w/my co-workers and externally w/the public, and a significant asset to the Judicial Branch as I was personally handpicked by Administrative Judge, the Honorable James J. Devine, to fill-in as the Caseflow Coordinator while the permanent employee in that position was out on maternity leave. I not only accomplished this daunting task for over a period of six- (6) months, but I did so without the necessary law degree required by Judicial Branch policy to be in this position. I so pleased the judges on staff with my innate skillset that Judge James J. Devine, Judge Robert A. Martin, and Judge Seymour L. Hendel gladly wrote letters of recommendation on my behalf for my future aspirations of permanent employment with the State of CT. Additionally, Judge Clarence Jones offered to give a verbal reference if ever requested to do so from any future employment prospects. The Caseflow Coordinator, likewise, was very pleased with my job performance and personally told me she only felt comfortable leaving me in her stead whenever she was out of work rather than any other TAC or employee. Aside from this well noted accomplishment, I also was asked by Chief Clerk Feldman and Deputy Chief Clerk Kimberly McGee to be a Court Coder upon my return to the Clerk's office after my stint in Caseflow. I was excited to have been asked to work in this capacity as it too was a coveted position for permanent employees and I was still only a TAC. At the same time I was saddened as I was no longer scheduled to clerk on trials and hearings as my fellow TACS were. I have an innate affinity to law and learned something new every time I clerked on a docketed matter or short calendar Monday. I likened it unto attending University for free.

I was finally hired in 2008 as an Office Clerk in Norwich for GA-21's criminal/motor vehicle court. Upon my exit interview in New London, Chief Feldman asked me where I saw myself in the next five- (5) years. I stated that I saw myself in law school because I loved the work I did so much. He seconded that motion with this statement, in part, "I can easily see you doing that. You did such a

wonderful job in Caseflow--- an even better job than some Caseflow Coordinators in the past with law degrees.” He then mentioned my soon to be new supervisor, Cara Parkinson, Deputy Chief Clerk at GA-21 and Linda Worobey, Deputy Chief Clerk of GA-10 and a well known beef that they had between each other over the years that had made his task as their supervisor difficult. I had never heard of these two – (2) individuals, save through the means of the position of Office Clerk I had interviewed for with each of them, and I had most certainly not been privy to the knowledge of their ill will toward one another prior to Chief Feldman’s claim. He went further to state that I had demonstrated to him long ago that I had a very amicable personality and that he felt I would somehow have a positive effect on the broken relationship between these two – (2) woman who at one point in time were inseparable as they had both worked together at GA-10.

And so I left New London Superior Court in 2008 on a note of humility at the accolades bestowed upon me by “my judges”, as I affectionately referred to them, and by Chief Feldman. At the same time I also left with a sense of confidence for the work ethic that I had developed during my years as a TAC for the Judicial Branch and for the goals I had hoped to fulfill with new beginnings as a permanent Judicial employee at GA-21 in Norwich. My immediate supervisors, Cara Parkinson and Corrine McCarthy, Assistant Deputy Clerk, however, quickly dashed my dreams for longevity within the State of CT. I went from a confident and productive employee to a quiet, anxiety filled, and eventually mealy-mouthed staffer who was constantly nitpicked upon and talked about and defamed by these two – (2). Their behavior(s) were not solely reserved for me though, for each and every one of my co-workers in the criminal/motor vehicle clerk’s office went through this torment and felt the very same PTSD inducing symptoms from the sociopathic conduct of Cara Parkinson and Corrine McCarthy.

Our office was ranked in the top five – (5) in the state for accuracy for our work output, but it was at the cost of our morale and self-esteem due to these two individuals. On a monthly basis every single mistake that each of us made was documented and kept under lock and key in a file cabinet in Cara’s office. And each and every month we were paraded 1 by 1 into the confines of her small office to hear the litany of mistakes we made in the presence Corrine and the Criminal Caseflow coordinator, Cheryl D’Amato, both of whom did her bidding to record these mistakes on her behalf to ensure we helped to retain that top five – (5) ranking Cara so coveted.

There were instances when my co-workers went to the bathroom to cry after being bullied in the open by Cara and/or Corrine over easily fixable errors. There were times when some of my fellow co-workers cried on the way to the parking garage after a long day at work of dealing with the public mixed with the persecution of Cara and Corrine; and there were occasions when we had to endure the both of them screaming at one another and at each other's throats over some personal discrepancy. Additionally, there was a multiplicity of foul language and sexual innuendo and harassment, inclusive of homophobic discrimination, and of course racism--- for that train is never late with bullies of such sociopathic capacities. The bullying exercised by Cara and Corrine was at the detriment of my co-worker's and my mental health. Some of us, myself included even dreamed about them at night because we were in constant fear of their retaliatory behaviors. Superior Court Operations records and/or Human Resource records will reflect a consistent barrage of calls from Cara Parkinson relative to simple matters of her *perceived* insubordination by us, while next door in the Family Clerk's Office this action, according to a tenured supervisor in that office, was *never* done to the staff there--- no matter the circumstance.

That stated my case is slightly distinctive from that of my co-workers. Although I mostly stayed to myself, which was a subconsciously developed *modus operandi* as I never knew what to expect from these two – (2), I did become close with another female employee. We had many things in common as we were both single parents and new to our positions. We shared a similar work ethic and religious beliefs--- that of Christianity, and we both genuinely liked each other enough that we were planning on going on a single's cruise together. We would often stay in the parking garage and talk in our cars after work exhaling about our day or our lives in general before going home to our main job--- our children. For some unknown reason our relationship incensed Corrine McCarthy. So much so that in or about 2009, it became obvious to my friend and me that she had a disdain for me as manifested by the particular manner in which she dealt with me as opposed to the daily normal abuse that was exhibited towards my co-workers. Additionally, both Cara and Corrine met with my friend in Corrine's office 1 day while I was in the vault in the adjacent Family Clerk's office. They asked her if it "bothered her when Habibah" spoke to her. This question made my friend so angry that I immediately noted a change in her normally serene demeanor upon reentry into the criminal/motor vehicle clerk's office. My friend and I sensed what was happening and strategically planned our interaction at the office from that moment forward to avoid any further backlash. As ridiculous as that sounds it was a necessary survival

tactic to ensure our positions as heads of household for our families. At any rate, shortly after this event, our desks, which had once been adjacent to one another, were separated during my absence from work due to illness. Upon my return to work, Cara immediately ushered me into her office to officially note the rearrangement and make this statement, in part, "I think (co-worker) is a little upset because you are no longer stationed next to her, but if everybody in the courthouse would mind their own business instead of speculating as to why I did this, then she would be fine." She went on to state that this was her office and she could do whatever she wanted to do in it. It is important to note that my friend and I sought refuge from this abuse with a supervisor within the Family Clerk's Office. This individual is to be commended for speaking with Corrine about her abuse towards me immediately after our complaints. This supervisor came back with a word of caution for me to be extra careful because Corrine had stated that she definitely didn't like me and *never* had from the beginning of my employment at GA-21. I used to speculate on how I could have been so adored by my supervisors and co-workers at New London Superior Court, but so utterly hated by Corrine. Was it my Muslim name? Was it the fact that I quietly said my grace over my lunch? Or could it have been the fact, according to Cara Parkinson prior to her specific targeting of me, that I was the most highly recommended individual that she had ever hired? To date, I do not know the answer to this question. Corrine had additionally complained to this supervisor about the fact that my friend and I would talk out in our cars after work as if that was against Judicial Branch Policy or a crime. At any rate, my friend was essentially asked again by Cara and Corrine if it bothered her when I spoke to her. Needless to say, the relationship with my friend slowly but surely reverted back to that of co-worker, but on a distinctly distant level after this, and most particularly relative to a disagreement I had with Cara Parkinson after having major surgery in 2009. I was out of work for almost thirty days, but I must say despite the physical pain I endured, I was on cloud 9 because for that short period of time I did not have to suffer from Cara's and Corrine's monstrous behavior. Please note, my surgeon kept me out of work two – (2) weeks longer than usual for this procedure because of the stressful conditions of my job relative to Cara's and Corrine's abuse.

Upon my return to work I was called into Cara's office for disciplinary action relative to my tardy return from lunch break one day. Once again in the presence of Corrine and Cheryl in the small confines of her office, Cara berated me while violating my personal space. An argument ensued and she immediately called Hartford who suspended me for a period of two – (2) weeks. My primary care

physician, however, kept me out of work for approximately four – (4) weeks time as he knew I was working in an unhealthy environment.

During this timeframe I initiated a grievance against Cara Parkinson and Corrine McCarthy for their behaviors and my suspension. Upon clearance from my PC to return I was beckoned to Hartford for a meeting with a representative from Court Operations. During a break my Union President informed me of an unprecedented petition that Corrine had circulated at the GA-21 to have me barred from *ever* returning. She alleged that I had threatened to shoot her and Cara with a gun. Corrine got seven – (7) signatures before our Union President (for we shared the very same one) told her to cease and desist. However, I aver the damage was already done; you cannot unring a bell. Lines were drawn in the sand and co-workers were choosing sides based off of this most damaging and unfounded to date lie.

I returned to GA- 21 and was isolated at a desk within the Family Clerk's Office, whilst still conducting criminal/motor vehicle matters. It is at this point that Cara and Corrine began a most strategic onslaught of bullying via micromanaging my every move, action, and assigned duty with the assistance of Cheryl D'Amato. I was virtually written up for everything under the sun, including for following the directive of a supervisor within the Family Clerk's Office to answer phones and assist the public at the window with family matter inquiries. Stuck in between this was the staff within my new confines that self-admittedly were tormented by seeing me being bullied by Cara, Corrine and Cheryl with no end in sight. The Family Chief Clerk, Jorene Coutore, however, was best friends with Cara Parkinson, and, thusly, became intimately involved with the daily bullying waged against me. Her Deputy Chief Clerk, David Gage, saw things differently and vehemently stood up for me every chance he could. This, of course, led to several arguments between Jorene and David on who was actually the "bad guy" in the matter. After one such blowout David revealed to me that he had to stay home the next day because what was being done to me was taking a toll on him. Please note this is a consequence of unchecked bullying as it not only affects the target, but causes PTSD for witnesses.

Please also note all the while, I was consistently beckoned to Hartford to deal with the disciplinary measures for my suspension from months prior. At one such meeting Maria R. Kewer, Court Operations Personnel Manager, and one most infamous for doling out disciplinary measures for

most might assume. I honestly don't recall the response to my request for promotion, but AG Brouillette conceded to the retraining. However, in an effort to protect Cara's and Corrine's dignity and reputation, she opted for retraining for *all* supervisory positions within Judicial. As for my financial compensation, she claimed the state simply did not have the funds. As such, there was no settlement reached that day.

As time dragged on without redemption, I developed a profound sadness. I was in constant mourning for my fall from grace. Rumors were rampant about me throughout all three – (3) New London County Courthouses and amongst my community. I developed extreme agoraphobia, depression, PTSD inclusive of noted physical ailments, and even suicidal ideation. The latter was directly correlated to my termination by the Judicial Branch in June of 2011 after the inability to return to work after expiration of FMLA time from an extended absence as prescribed by my world renowned psychiatrist, Julia Chase-Brand. I lost a \$39K job and the means to take care of my children financially to the standard they had grown accustomed to over the years. My depression affected not only me, but my Mother and my children who all saw me deteriorate before their eyes. While I was able to initiate Worker's Comp cases for the physical manifestations of my PTSD, I could not preserve a claim for the deterioration of my mental health as there is no statutory provision for this ramification of workplace bullying.

My Federal case was essentially dismissed in January of 2013 by Her Honor Bond Arterton without prejudice. Atty. Williams appealed to the Second Circuit. And a funny thing happened in the interim of judgment at the appellate level: Corrine McCarthy was terminated on July 3, 2012 via letter signed by Joseph D. D'Alesio, Executive Director of Court Operations. She admittedly perjured herself in my Federal suit against her relative to the petition that had caused me so much angst. She was escorted from her most recent workplace, that of juvenile court in Waterford, a disciplinary reassignment from her bullying of another subordinate in March of 2012. It is well documented that on her way out of juvenile court she screamed, in part, "This is what I get for lying on Habibah for Cara?" She was essentially banned from entering the Norwich courthouse as a precaution for threats against Cara. Corrine lost an annual salary of \$76K, but she was never to date arrested for her felonious act of perjury in a Federal case. After her termination she alleged Cara knew all along about the petition to bar me from return to work as they discussed it via phone the night prior to its circulation. Corrine avers

that Cara stated "You're in the union and I'm not, so you do the petition on your own." Cara maintains, via affidavit emailed to Maria Kewer, that she reported the petition as soon as she found out about it. At any rate, the three – (3) judge panel at the appellate court blasted the AG's office for its representation of Cara after Corrine's termination and perjury. It was stated on the record if one defendant lied then the other defendant lied as well--- still my case was dismissed in June of 2013. This time there was no newspaper articles. No shouts of vindication by Cara Parkinson as previously done with the initial dismissal. My case just faded away as if nothing had ever happened, but not before costing family and loved ones over \$6K for my attorney's fees.

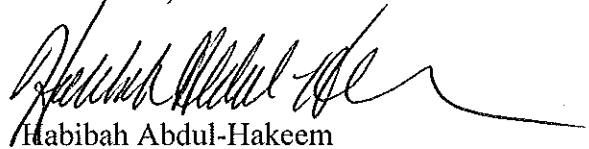
Now, let me tell you what else it cost me personally. I have *never* regained sustainable employment since my termination. My car was repossessed and I am now relegated to a bus line which I do not always have access to because of my significant financial loss. I now receive Medicaid and utilize food pantries for sustenance for my youngest child and myself. I also eat at my community's local soup kitchen as needed when I am not volunteering there. All of this, and then some--- due to my undeserved termination by Court Operations as a result of unsolicited workplace bullying by Cara Parkinson, Corrine McCarthy, Cheryl D'Amato, and Jorene Couture. Additionally, my name is blacklisted, and oh how I hate that term, within the legal community and amongst state agencies. The suicidal ideation is gone, but due to my PTSD I qualify for assistance from the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services in my job hunting efforts. My case manager was not sure of my allegations of being ostracized to the extent of not being employable in my field of work, but only up until December of 2014. She spoke with a local New London County attorney in December who specifically told her that I would do better to apply for positions outside of New London County as I would *never* be hired in the area due to the course of events as aforementioned.

I can only imagine Corrine's dismay at having been thrown under the bus and losing her established since '93 state career at the calculated manipulations of Cara Parkinson who is still employed by the Judicial Branch to date. Again, neither has been arrested for their crimes of perjury. Attorney Williams assured me that had it been me who had committed this crime that the AG's office or the FBI would have definitely arrested *me*. That stated I would be remiss not to bring to light that my case is not the first against Cara Parkinson and Corrine McCarthy. Claims of a hostile work environment and age discrimination were alleged against them via a CHRO matter with a current

judicial employee. That claimant won her matter, but Cara and Corrine felt no ramifications for their bullying of that individual. Perhaps if a bullying law had of been in effect even after this, I may have never of had to endure the trauma and defamation that is forever etched in the annals of cyberspace with a mere click of a button after typing my name into your browser; and/or I would have been justifiably recompensed for my pain and suffering and still be employed by the State of CT. Perhaps Cara and Corrine would have been flagged with a criminal record for their abusive acts instead of being represented with taxpayers' money to defend their sociopathic behavior time and again.

The passing of this bill is most essential as it is a preventative measure to costly litigation and more importantly the destruction of healthy employees' mental psyche. Please do not allow what you may perceive as awkward phrasing or semantics stop you from doing the morally correct thing for your constituents.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Habibah Abdul-Hakeem', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Habibah Abdul-Hakeem